

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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POUCHED AS INFO TO ALL CONSULATES IN CANADA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: JEAN MARCHAND APPOINTED ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

REF: OTTAWA 4469

1. IN SURPRISE MOVE, MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO JEAN MARCHAND WAS SWORN IN THURSDAY AS NEW MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, HIS SEVENTH JOB IN LIBERAL CABINETS SINCE 1965. THE APPOINTMENT AFFAIRS CONTINUED SEPARATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND FISHERIES PORTFOLIOS, ALTHOUGH FISHERIES MINISTER ROMEO LEBLANC HAD BEEN HOLDING BOTH JOBS SINCE JEANNE SAUVE MOVED FROM ENVIRONMENT TO COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY TWO MONTHS AGO.

2. MARCHAND'S APPOINTMENT CONSIDERED SURPRISE BECAUSE REPORTS OF FAILING HEALTH AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH SCANDAL HAD LED SOME OBSERVERS TO BELIEVE HE WAS WINDING DOWN FEDERAL POLITICAL CAREER. AS TRANSPORT MINISTER TO LAST SEPTEMBER, HE HAD BEEN GRILLED BY OPPOSITION DURING AIR CANADA INQUIRY AND SUBSEQUENTLY HOSPITALIZED FOR HYPERTENSION. ALSO LAST AUTUMN, HE WAS CHARGED WITH LEAVING SCENE OF ACCIDENT AND LOST DRIVER'S LICENSE FOR

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ONE YEAR. MORE RECENTLY IN NOVEMBER HE WAS QUESTIONED BY

RCMP IN SKY SHOP INVESTIGATION AFTER INITIALLY CAUSING
FUROR BY REFUSING COOPERATION BECAUSE OF PRESS LEAKS
(SEE REFTEL). APPOINTMENT HAS ALREADY LED CONSERVATIVE
LEADERSHIP CANDIDATE JOE CLARK TO CHARGE THAT ENVIRON-
MENT PORTFOLIO IS QUOTE TOO IMPORTANT TO BE TREATED AS
RETIREMENT HOME FOR WORN-OUT MINISTERS UNQUOTE.

3. COMMENT: APPOINTMENT OF COLORFUL AND CONTROVERSIAL
MARCHAND SHOWS TRUDEAU'S STAUNCH LOYALTY TO OLD QUEBEC
BUDDIES. APPOINTMENT DOES NOT UPGRADE PORTFOLIO, AND
TRUDEAU HIMSELF TOLD REPORTERS CONCERNED WITH MARCHAND'S
HEALTH THAT QUOTE ADMINISTRATIVELY, ENVIRONMENT IS A
LESS HEAVY PORTFOLIO THAN TRANSPORT UNQUOTE. ONE ADVANTAGE
OF MARCHAND, HOWEVER, MAY BE THAT AS LONG-TIME CLOSE AND
PERSONAL FRIEND OF TRUDEAU HE WILL PROBABLY HAVE BETTER
ACCESS TO PM THAN ANY PAST ENVIRONMENT MINISTER.
JOHNSON

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